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Statement submitted by *Solidarité agissante pour le développement familial*, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Solidarité agissante pour le développement familial (SADF), having been mindful since 1995 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the compelling statements made therein, namely the resolution to promote equality, development and peace for all women throughout the world for the benefit of humanity as a whole, wishes to present, on behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the following response relating to the United Nations post-2015 action plan.

The progress made in meeting that objective is encouraging and several African countries are performing very well, in particular with regard to gender equality in primary education and the number of seats occupied by women in national parliaments. There is still work to be done to ensure equal rights for girls in secondary and higher education, and the further promotion of women's access to paid work outside the agricultural sector remains a challenge, despite some reported progress.

However, the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment continues to be hindered by certain cultural practices (early marriage, preference given to boys with regard to schooling and power relations within the family) and the lack of economic and employment opportunities (access to markets, capital and professional training; patriarchal influence) and political opportunities (lack of political training) for women.

In order to foster progress, it is vital to initiate a cultural transformation that will reverse negative attitudes towards gender equality and women's empowerment in certain societies, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Public policy should be refocused to tackle discrimination against girls and women in the education system and gender-based discrimination in relation to access to education, economic opportunities and employment, in order to ensure the increased participation of women in economic and productive activities and to involve them in decision-making at all levels of society. To achieve that goal, it will be essential to implement economic and social policies that better meet the needs of both men and women. In particular, that will mean drawing up positive discrimination strategies to benefit women, reforming those aspects of customary law that are detrimental to women and girls and allocating increased human and financial resources to the enforcement of relevant provisions.

SADF calls on the United Nations, and the African States in particular, to transform the political will demonstrated into concrete action by:

- Establishing suitable and practical regulatory frameworks
- Establishing strong institutions managed by competent individuals of integrity
- Providing sufficient material and financial resources
- Adopting positive discrimination strategies that benefit women in order to boost gender equality and empower women, in particular:
    - Harsher penalties for offences relating to sexual harassment, early marriage, the rape of minors and violence against female pupils
    - The introduction of scholarships for girls from poor families

- The allocation of training grants and fee exemptions for women and girls in training colleges
- The creation of a women's bank to fund women's projects.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, we the members of SADF will spare no effort in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women by implementing the recommendations and strategies enshrined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

We believe that, together, we can help to build a new society based on justice, love and respect for human dignity.